

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 7860

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG, ILO; BE

SUBJECT: US TACTICS IN ILO

1. JOZEF HOUTHUYS, PRESIDENT OF BELGIUM'S LARGEST TRADE UNION, THE CONFEDERATION OF CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONS (CSC), ON SEVERAL DIFFERENT OCCASIONS HAS EXPRESSED TO EMBASSY OFFICERS HIS VIEWS ON US PARTICIPATION IN THE ILO. MR. HOUTHUYS HAS SERVED FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS ON THE COMMITTEE ON THE APPLICATION OF CONVENTIONS. PARAPHRASED BELOW ARE HIS COMMENTS.

2. WHILE SHARING US IDEALS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND POLITICAL DEMOCRACY, SOME OF AMERICA'S FRIENDS ARE DISTRESSED BY ITS TACTICS AND PUZZLED BY ITS STRATEGY IN THE ILO. REGARDING TACTICAL HANDLING OF ILO, HOUTHUYS MADE THESE POINTS:

A. CONTINUING EMPHASIS ON THE 25 PERCENT U.S. SHARE OF THE ILO BUDGET DOES NOT IMPRESS. AMERICA ENJOYS A LARGE SHARE OF THE WORLD'S RESOURCES, AND SHOULD CONTRIBUTE ACCORDINGLY. THIS IS SIMPLE JUSTICE.

B. USG PROFESSES TO REGRET POLITICIZATION OF THE ILO, YET NEVER MISSES A CHANCE TO SCORE POLITICAL POINTS AGAINST THE SOVIETS AND OTHER EAST EUROPEANS.

C. THESE POINTS ARE NOT ALWAYS WELL FOUNDED AND ARE SOMETIMES MADE IN AN OFFENSIVE OR UNJUST FASHION. FOR EXAMPLE, US WORKER DELEGATES IN THE APPLICATION OF CONVENTIONS COMMITTEE AT THE JUNE 1976 CONFERENCE UNFAIRLY CAST ASPERSIONS ON THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE COMMITTEE PRESIDENT (DUTCH) AND SECRETARIAT MEMBERS,

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MEN THEMSELVES DEDICATED TO FREE AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

AND UNDESERVING OF SUCH ABUSE.

3. REGARDING US STRATEGY, HOUTHUYS WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO KNOW WHERE, ULTIMATELY, THE US SEEKS TO GO IN THE ILO. ALL WESTERNERS KNOW THAT THE EAST EUROPEANS DO NOT ENJOY OUR PRIVILEGES, SUCH AS FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION. WE ALSO KNOW THEIR SYSTEM IS IN FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION WITH THE STRUCTURE OF ILO AND WITH MANY OF ITS OBJECTIVES. YET THEIR SYSTEM MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IT THERE IS TO BE AN ILO. IDEOLOGICAL PURITY AND CONSISTENCY WOULD REQUIRE THE EXPULSION OF THE EAST EUROPEANS AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF THIRD-WORLD COUNTRIES, SOME OF WHOM THE US CALLED FRIEND. IS DESTRUCTION OF ILO OUR OBJECTIVE? IF NOT, THE US SHOULD RE-THINK ITS STRATEGY.

COMMENT

4. THE FOREGOING-SOME OF WHICH MAY BE FAMILIAR TO THE DEPARTMENT - EXPRESSES THE CONVICTIONS OF A WELL-DISPOSED AND PROMINENT EUROPEAN TRADE UNION LEADER. WE HAVE TWICE MADE FULL PRESENTATIONS TO HOUTHUYS OF THE ARGUMENTS CONTAINED IN THE SECRETARY'S LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE ILO. HE TAKES NO EXCEPTION BUT SEES LITTLE EVIDENCE OF A SPIRIT OF CONCILIATION WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO THE KIND OF ACCOMODATION MENTIONED THEREIN.

5. FOR INFORMATION AND POSSIBLE FUTURE USE, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE SUMMARY OF AND COMMENTS ON EVENTS IN THE COMMITTEE ON APPLICATION OF CONVENTIONS AT THE JUNE 1976 ILO CONFERENCE.
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